

Every day 43 people, aged 65 years and older in Los Angeles County, are hospitalized from falling and 3 per week die from complications. Falls are often due to hazards in the home. The following will help you identify and fix these problems to reduce your risk of fall-related injury.

Floors

Look at the floor in each room of your home.

- When you walk through a room, do you have to walk around furniture?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then ask someone to move the furniture so your path is clear
- Do you have throw rugs on the floor?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then remove rugs or put double-sided tape or non-slip backing so the rugs won't slip
- Are papers, magazines, books, shoes, boxes, blankets, towels, or other objects on the floor?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then pick up things that are on the floor.
- Do you have to walk over or around cords or wires (like cords from lamps, extension cords, or telephone cords)?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then coil or tape cords and wires next to the wall so you can't trip over them. Have an electrician put in another outlet.

Stairs and Steps

Look at the stairs you use both inside and outside your home.

- Are papers, shoes, books, or other objects on the stairs?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then pick up things on the stairs. Always keep objects off the stairs.
- Are some steps broken or uneven?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then fix loose or uneven steps.
- Are you missing a light over the stairway?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then have a handyman or an electrician install a light at top & bottom of stairs.
- Has the stairway light bulb burned out?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then have a friend or family member change the light bulb.
- Do you have only one light switch for your stairs (only at the top or at the bottom of the stairs)?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then have a handyman or an electrician put in a light switch at the top and bottom of the stairs. You can get light switches that glow.
- Are the handrails loose or broken? Is there a handrail on only one side of the stairs?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then fix loose handrails or put in new ones. Make sure handrails are on both sides of the stairs and are as long as the stairs.
- Is the carpet on the steps loose or torn?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then make sure the carpet is firmly attached to every step or remove the carpet and attach non-slip rubber treads on the stairs.



Kitchen

Look at your kitchen and eating area.

- Are the things you use often on high shelves?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then move items you use often on the lower shelves (about waist high).
- Is your step stool unsteady?
☐ No ☐ Yes-buy a new, step stool with a bar to hold on to. Never use a chair as a step stool



...See following page

Bedrooms

Look at all your bedrooms.

- Is the light near the bed hard to reach?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then place a lamp close to the bed where it is easy to reach.
- Is the path from your bed to the bathroom dark?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then put in a night-light so you can see where you're walking. Some night-lights go on by themselves after dark.



Bathrooms

Look at all your bathrooms.

- Is the tub or shower floor slippery?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then put a non-slip rubber mat or self-stick strips on the floor of the tub or shower.
- Do you have some support when you get in and out of the tub or up from the toilet?
☐ No ☐ Yes-then have a handyman or a carpenter put in a grab bar inside the tub and next to the toilet.



Other Things You Can Do to Prevent Falls

- **Exercise:** Exercise regularly. Exercise makes you stronger and improves your balance and coordination.
- **Medications:** Have your doctor or pharmacist review your medication for fall-risks, including over-the-counter. Some medicines can make you sleepy or dizzy.
- **Vision:** Have your eyes checked once a year by an eye doctor. Poor vision increases fall-risks.
- **Getting-up:** Get up slowly after you sit or lie down
- **Types of Shoes:** Wear sturdy shoes with thin, non-slip soles. Avoid slippers and running shoes with thick soles.
- **Lighting in Your Home:** Improve the lighting in your home. Use brighter light bulbs (at least 60 watts). Use lampshades or frosted bulbs to reduce glare.
- **Household Activities:** When you use an electrical appliance that uses a long electric cord, such as a vacuum cleaner or a similar appliance-remember to pick up cord immediately. If you take a break, or answer the phone, be aware of where the cord is left. If someone in your home does not expect the cord to be left in a walkway, wind up the cord immediately.
- **Stairs:** Use reflecting tape at the top and bottom of the stairs so you can see them better.



Other Safety Tips

- Keep emergency numbers in large print near each phone
- Put a phone near the floor in case you fall and can't get up.
- Think about wearing an alarm device that will bring help in case you fall and can't get up.



Adapted from the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, Mailstop K-63, Atlanta, GA 30341